

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 0577

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MORG, PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDEASTFOR: THE APPROACH TO A NEW FORMAT

1. NEXT STEP. TIME PRESSURE ON MIDEASTFOR GROWING SEVERE AND NOW THAT ITS STAFF STUDIES ARE COMPLETE, AND GENERALLY FAVORABLE RESPONSES FROM AREA POSTS ARE IN HAND, I INTEND TO MOVE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TOWARD LEARNING IF NEW FORMAT IS POSSIBLE. DURING MARCH 1 MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER I SUGGESTED, AND HE AGREED, THAT VERY SOON AFTER HIS RETURN FROM AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT WE WOULD MEET AND GO OVER STILL-INFORMAL BUT DETAILED PROPOSAL WHICH I WILL PRESENT. PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO ACQUAINT DEPT WITH PROPOSAL ITSELF, ITS RATIONALE, AND WITH MANNER IN WHICH I INTEND TO USE IT. PROPOSAL BASED ON DATA PROVIDED BY AND IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH ADMIRAL CROWE AND HIS STAFF. IT DEALS ONLY WITH POSSIBLE FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS HERE, NOT WITH WHAT WE MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT ARRANGE FOR NAVY ELSEWHERE.

2. GENERAL APPROACH. AT MY REQUEST ADMIRAL AND HIS STAFF HAVE DEVELOPED A SERIES OF POSITIONS, A PREFERRED OUTCOME AND
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NUMBER OF FALLBACKS, WHICH START FROM POINT FONMIN AND I HAVE ALREADY REACHED -- THAT DE-HOMEPORTING IS SINE QUA NON OF NEW FORMAT -- AND WHICH THEREAFTER ARE AIMED AT PRESERVING DESIRED ON-SHORE SUPPORT CAPABILITY AND FOUR MONTHS PER YEAR BERTH TIME FOR FLAGSHIP. PROPOSAL I WILL PUT TO FONMIN WILL PRESENT DE-HOMEPORTING AS MAJOR USG CONCESSION, WHICH IT IS, AND WILL SUGGEST WAYS TO PACKAGE DE-HOMEPORTING TO MEET GOB'S

CONCERN THAT THIS MOVE BE SEEN TO BE END OF BAHRAIN'S ROLE AS "HOST TO SUPERPOWER BASE". MY FIRST PITCH TO FONMIN WILL OFFER ONLY COSMETIC CHANGES IN NAVY'S SHORE FACILITIES, REMOVE GATE GUARDS, TAKE DOWN NAVY SIGNS, ETC., LEAVING IT TO FONMIN TO RAISE QUESTION OF NAVY GIVING UP SOME OF BUILDINGS/AREAS IT NOW USES.

3. OPENING PROPOSAL WILL STRESS MASSIVE REDUCTION IN PERSONNEL WHICH DE-HOMEPORTING WILL BRING ABOUT. THIS WILL BE CONTRASTED WITH SMALL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE REMAIN. TAKING JULY, 1975 MIDEASTFOR PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT AS BASELINE, DE-HOMEPORTING WILL REMOVE OVER 600 OFFICERS AND MEN, PLUS SOME 300 DEPENDENTS, FROM BAHRAIN SCENE. IN CONTRAST, NAVY'S BEST CASE NEW FORMAT WOULD REQUIRE ONLY 71 U.S. PERSONNEL, WITH PERHAPS 25 FAMILIES. I WILL POINT OUT TO FONMIN THAT SCHOOL SUPPORT ALONE WOULD REQUIRE 21 U.S. EMPLOYEES. (COMPOSITION OF BASELINE FIGURES IS: ADMIRAL'S STAFF, 66 PERSONS; FLAGSHIP, 450; SHORE FACILITY, 100. THE 300 DEPENDENTS ARE ADDITIONAL. COMPOSITION OF PREFERRED OUTCOME FIGURE OF 71 PERSONS IS BASED ON CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONS, POSITION BY POSITION. SMALL NUMBER OF FAMILIES LIKELY TO BE ATTACHED TO THE 71 IS DUE TO YOUTH AND JUNIORITY OF MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO WOULD OCCUPY MOST OF THE 71 POSITIONS). ALSO, PROPOSAL WILL REDUCE IN-PORT TIME OF FLAGSHIP TO FOUR MONTHS, ONE EACH QUARTER, FROM PRESENT SITUATION IN WHICH FLAGSHIP HAS GUARANTEED ACCESS TO BERTH ALL YEAR, AND IS USUALLY TIED UP FOR SOME SEVEN MONTHS.

4. IDEAS FOR PUBLIC HANDLING OF DE-HOMEPORTING WHICH I WILL SUGGEST TO FONMIN ARE DESIGNED (A) TO MEET HIS NEED FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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VISIBLE AND CREDIBLE END TO "BASE" IMAGE AND (B) TO STEER HIM AWAY FROM ANY "SHARING THE BURDEN" LINE IN REGARD TO OTHER STATES. POINT WOULD BE THAT MIDEASTFOR HAD BECOME AN AFLOAT COMMAND, CALLING AS BEFORE AT FRIENDLY PORTS, OF WHICH BAHRAIN WOULD BE ONE, AND PERFORMING ITS MISSION AS BEFORE, ALBEIT WITH SOME SCHEDULING AND LOGISTICS CHANGES. IN SHORT, THERE SHOULD BE LITTLE IF ANY VALIDITY TO A STATEMENT THAT ONE OR ANOTHER STATE HAD PICKED UP "BURDEN" WHICH BAHRAIN HAD SHED. I WILL SUGGEST THAT IN LATE JUNE THERE BE PUBLIC DE-HOMEPORTING CEREMONY HERE, WITH COORDINATED ANNOUNCEMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT MIDEASTFOR HAD BECOME AFLOAT COMMAND, AND THAT USG AND GOB ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT TO MARK BOTH THE OCCASION AND OUR CONTINUING CLOSE AND AMICABLE RELATIONS. (FYI-- IN HIS TENTATIVE PLANNING OF FUTURE SAILING SCHEDULES, ASSUMING WE REACH AGREEMENT HERE, ADMIRAL WILL HAVE FLAGSHIP LEAVE BAHRAIN O/A JULY 1, RETURNING BRIEFLY ONLY IN OCTOBER, AND NOT RETURNING FOR A LONG PERIOD UNTIL DECEMBER. THIS LENGTHY ABSENCE COULD BE HELPFUL ELEMENT IN CONVINCING FONMIN THAT WE TAKE SERIOUSLY HIS CONCERN THAT DE-HOMEPORTING BE A CREDIBLE

ACT. END FYI.)

5. FALLBACK POSITIONS. NAVY COULD MAKE DO WITHOUT DEPENDENTS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL LIVING HERE COULD BE REDUCED FROM 71 NOTED ABOVE TO AS FEW AS 34 AND STILL PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT FUNCTIONS FOR MIDEASTFOR AND SCHOOL. SHORE FACILITY ITSELF OFFERS CONSIDERABLE SCOPE FOR FURTHER REDUCTIONS IN PHYSICAL PRESENCE, IF NECESSARY (AS I SUSPECT IT WILL BE). IF PRESSED, NAVY COULD GIVE UP APPROXIMATELY TWO-THIRDS OF FACILITY'S SQUARE FOOTAGE, AND ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF FACILITY'S THIRTY-ODD BUILDINGS. REDUCTION IN PERSONNEL FROM 71 TO 34 MADE POSSIBLE LARGELY BY DOING WITHOUT CLASSIFIED COMMUNICATIONS AND BY CUTTING MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL TO BARE-BONES MINIMUM. GIVING UP TWO-THIRDS OF FACILITY'S SQUARE FOOTAGE, KEEPING ONLY OFFICE/WORK AREAS (AND PERHAPS SMALL BARRACKS) WOULD DEPRIVE PERSONNEL OF RECREATIONAL AND MESSING FACILITIES WHICH ARE IMPORTANT DUE BOTH TO VERY HIGH COSTS OF LOCAL SUBSTITUTES AND TO DESIRE
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TO KEEP THE BOYS OFF THE STREETS.

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ACTION SS-25

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-----131431Z 017105 /44

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4357

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAMA 0577

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6. QUIDS AND QUOS. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, FONMIN HAS NOT RAISED QUESTION OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE SINCE BEFORE MY JANUARY CONSULTATIONS AND HE HAS HEARD FROM ME SINCE, AS WELL AS FROM MEDIA, ABOUT NEW ADMINISTRATION'S ATTITUDES TOWARD AND

REVIEW OF U.S. ARMS SALES ABROAD. GOB MAY ALSO HAVE HAD WORD FROM SAUDIS WHICH PRINCE SULTAN PASSED TO AMBASSADOR PORTER: SAG WANTS NO FANCY WEAPONS ON BAHRAIN. MOREOVER, HEIR APPARENT/ DEFENSE MINISTER HAS NOT CONTACTED ME RE DEFENSE SURVEY REPORT SINCE MY RETURN FROM RIYADH. I HAVE TOLD NUMBER OF HIS ADVISERS WHO HAVE RAISED ISSUE BRIEFLY DURING SOCIAL FUNCTIONS THAT DELAY DUE TO NEW ADMINISTRATION'S REVIEW, AND REMAINED THEM THAT BACK IN DECEMBER I HAD ALERTED THEIR BOSS TO POSSIBILITY THIS KEIND OF DELAY. OF COURSE I WILL NOT RAISE ISSUE IN NEXT MEETING WITH FONMIN. NOR AT THAT POINT WILL I MENTION REDUCING OUR RENT (SEE BELOW).

7. IT OF COURSE REMAINS TO BE SEEN BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THOSE IN GOB WHO WANT SOPHISTICATED ARMS ARE BEGINNING TO GET THE MESSAGE THAT WE PROBABLY WILL NOT SELL THEM AND THAT, IN ANY CASE, SAUDIS WOULD NOT FINANCE THEM. THOSE HERE WHO OPPOSE FANCY ARMS, SUCH AS FONMIN, CONCEIVABLY COULD FIND THEMSELVES FEELING MORE FLEXIBLE TOWARD FUTURE OF NAVY HERE
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PRECISELY BECAUSE KEEPING SOME NAVY WILL NOT ALSO MEAN HEAVY ARMS PURCHASE BURDEN. THERE PROBABLY WILL BE NEED TO OFFER HEIR APPARENT/DEFENSE MINISTER SALE OF SOME ARMS BUT, HOPEFULLY, THESE COULD BE OF EASILY JUSTIFIABLE NATURE: HELICOPTERS, SMALL CRAFT, CONVENTIONAL AA GUNS. FOR OUR PART, WE SHOULD OF COURSE NOT PAY FOR REDUCED ACCESS/FACILITIES SAME RENT WE ARE NOW PAYING. REDUCTION SHOULD BE TIED TO PERCENTAGE REDUCTIONS IN BERTH TIME AND FACILITIES USED.

8. ARRANGEMENTS ELSEWHERE. MIDEASTFOR STAFF BELIEVES THAT, ON BASIS POSTS' REPLIES TO STATE 30235, THERE IS ADEQUATE BASIS FOR EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF MIDEASTFOR AS AN AFLOAT COMMAND, PROVIDED OF COURSE THAT DESIRED ACCESS TO PORTS, WHICH POSTS HAVE IN THE MAIN JUDGED TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO HOST GOVERNMENTS, IS INDEED FORTHCOMING. ADMIRAL CROWE FULLY UNDERSTANDS THAT IN SOME OF COUNTRIES CONCERNED IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT, AND PERHAPS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, TO ASK IN THE ABSTRACT FOR GUARANTEED PORT ACCESS OVER NEXT FEW YEARS. HE INTENDS INSTEAD TO DRAW UP DETAILED PORT VISIT SCHEDULE, PROJECTED ONE YEAR AHEAD, FOR BOTH DESTROYERS AND FLAGSHIP AND ASK POSTS TO SEEK APPROVAL FOR THOSE VISITS ONLY. POTENTIAL PROBLEM HIGHLIGHTED IN STATE 30235 -- THAT GOB WOULD WANT TO POINT FINGER AT OTHER GOVERNMENTS WHICH AGREE TO INCREASED PORT VISITS -- MIGHT BE AVOIDED BY APPROACH DESCRIBED PARA 4 ABOVE OR AT LEAST MITIGATED BY MAKING ONLY GENERAL REFERENCE TO MIDEASTFOR INCREASING ITS PRESENCE ELSEWHERE FOLLOWING DE-HOMEPORTING IN BAHRAIN.
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